



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme – extension to the listings of Fosamax® Once Weekly, Alendro® Once Weekly and Fosamax® Plus (alendronate)

Why is this important?

- Nearly two million Australians, about 10 per cent of people, have osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a condition in which the bones lose mineral density and become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher risk of fractures than normal bone.
- An extension of the listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for a once weekly formulation of alendronate, available from 1 April 2007, will provide treatment for more patients with osteoporosis. The current Medicare item for bone mineral density testing has also been expanded to allow people aged 70 years and over to have their bone density tested without the need for other medical indications, such as fractures.
- To be eligible to receive alendronate under the new extension, a patient must be aged 70 years of age or older with a bone mineral density T-score of -3.0 or less (0 being considered normal).

Who will benefit?

- Around 40,800 new patients will become eligible for treatment with alendronate in the first full financial year of listing. An additional 325,600 patients will be eligible for Medicare-subsidised bone mineral density testing in 2007-08.
- Alendronate improves bone mineral density and reduces fracture risk.

What funding is the Government committing to this initiative?

- The annual cost to the PBS is about \$593 per patient per year. The extension to the PBS listing will add around \$82.7 million to PBS expenditure between 2006-07 and 2010-11.
- The expanded Medicare item for bone mineral density testing will add around \$115.5 million to Medicare expenditure between 2006-07 and 2010-11.

What have we done in the past?

- Alendronate has been PBS listed since 1 November 1996. PBS expenditure on alendronate in 2005-06 was approximately \$111 million.
- Bone mineral density testing has been a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) approved item for some time for patients who have had a fracture following minimal trauma.

When will the initiative conclude?

- This is an ongoing initiative.